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TRAFFIC (U.S.A.)

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RIVER OTTER EXPORT

AND

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

prepared by

TRAFFIC (U.S.A.)

for

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SYNOPSIS

During the 1970's, 29 states trapped river otters Lutra canadensis for their pelts. A total of 183,415 otters were harvested in the United States during the last nine years (Table 1). The number taken since the early 1970's appears to have increased: less than 20,000 yearly were reportedly captured prior to the 1976/77 season, while 32,846 were harvested in the 1976/77 season, 27,031 in the 1977/78 season, and 29.665 in the 1978/79 season. This increase may not actually be real since better reporting systems have recently been implemented in several states and many states did not report trapping records prior to 1977.

During the 1978/79 trapping season 29,665 river otter were harvested: Louisiana reported over 9,700 taken, and Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina each trapped over 1,000 river otters during the same season. Several states have increased the number of river otters reportedly taken: Arkansas reported less than 100 otters/year taken during the early 1970's, while harvesting over 700 during the 1978/79 season; Georgia increased its annual reported take from several hundred in the early 1970's to over 3,000 per year during the 1976/77, 1977/78, and 1978/79 seasons; Louisiana harvested between 4,000 and 8,000 river otters annually between the 1970/71 and 1975/76 trapping seasons, and over the last few years has taken between 7,000 and 12,000 river otters/year.

All Lutra species including Lutra canadensis are currently on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and require an export permit to be transported to another country.

According to U.S. CITES Reports, the United States exported only 3,014 river otter skins in Calendar Year 1977 and 10,871 skins in Calendar Year 1978 (Table 2); 8,586 river otters were exported in Fiscal Year 1978 (October 1977 - September 1978) and 10,663 in Fiscal Year 1979 (Table 3). Most of the pelts were exported to Canada, Switzerland, and West Germany (Table 2). Assuming most pelts are exported in the Calendar Year following trapping (i.e. 1977/78 trapping season pelts were exported in Calendar Year 1978), only 9% of the 1976/77 river otter pelts taken and 40% of the 1977/78 pelts taken were actually exported. These percentages are unrealistic since the demand for river otter pelts in the United States is small and most states claim that most skins are exported to Canada and Europe. This discrepancy most likely stems from the CITES Permit Office (Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Interior) not issuing or receiving all the required export permits due to unfamiliarity of the new permit system; it is likely that in 1977 and 1978 otter skins left the United States without a CITES export permit.

Canada also has populations of Lutra canadensis. According to otter harvest reports, 116,924 river otters were taken during the 1970/71 to 1976/77 seasons (Table 1). Canada exported over 3,400 river otter skins and 157 finished otter products in 1977 and over 4,800 skins and 189 products in 1978 (Table 4); most of the skins were exported to Italy, Switzerland, the United States, and West Germany. Based on the 1976/77 trapping records and the 1977 CITES reports, Canada exported around 17% of their harvested otters in 1977. It is

likely that many more were exported, and like the United States, either CITES permits were not issued or received by the Canadian CITES authorities. Based on trapping records in the United States from 1970 to 1979 and trapping reports in Canada from 1970 to 1976, a minimum of 300,339 river otters were harvested in both countries during the 1970's (Table 1). In the United States, river otter pelt prices rose from an average of $18 in 1970 to $53 in 1976, and in Canada, pelt prices increased from $28 in 1970 to around $70 in 1975 and 1976.

A total of only 10,006 Lutra canadensis skins were imported by all countries in 1977 (re-exports included) and 16,976 skins in 1978 (Table 5). An additional 87 finished products (such as coats and jackets) and 180 finished articles in 1978 were imported. West Germany imported approximately one third of the skins, and large numbers of pelts were imported by Austria, Canada, Italy, Switzerland and the United States.

Many discrepancies exist between what a country claims to export and what the importing country claims to receive from that exporting country. For example, in 1977 the United States reported exports of 434 otter skins to West Germany while West Germany reported imports of 3,506 skins from the U.S. (Table 2). Similarly, the U.S. reported export of 2,187 skins to Switzerland in 1978 while Switzerland recorded imports of only 195 skins from the U.S. (Table 2). Canada reported exports of 1,540 skins to Switzerland in 1977 and a further 1,024 skins in 1978 while Switzerland lists no

imports of otter skins from Canada in 1977 and only 76 skins in 1978 (Table 4).

Several other species of river otter are harvested for their pelts and traded worldwide. According to CITES Reports, West Germany imported over 16,000 Lutra skins (unspecified) in 1977 and over 24,000 skins in 1978 (Table 6); of these, 8,349 skins in 1977 and 17,273 skins in 1978 came from Paraguay, and over 4,000 otter skins per year were exported from Peru. Both the United Kingdom and West Germany reported the re-export of Lutra skins in their CITES Reports (Table 7); most of these remain in Europe.

References

Deems, E. F. and D. Pursley (1978). North American Furbearers, Their Management, Research and Harvest Status in 1976. Fur Resources Committee, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF RIVER OTTERS HARVESTED IN THE UNITED STATES (BY STATE) AND CANADA

	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79
ALABAMA								1500	2145
ALASKA	1500	2000	2570	2540	2074		3355	1981	1991
ARKANSAS	56	38	76	25	37	123	363	419	749
CONNECTICUT		14	7	7	13	14	10	63	74
DELAWARE	30	25	25	25	25	25	50	70	45
FLORIDA						856	2883	3326	2112
GEORGIA	670	222	585	453	624	495	3187	3097	3643
IDAHO	40			1					
LOUISIANA	4808	5440	7668	5989	6118	5730	11900	6597	9745
MAINE	588	637	593	871	1007	898	531	675	693
MARYLAND	131	360	218	208	141	130	182	187	262
MASSACHUSETTS	76	53	71	66	66	103	108	163	121
MICHIGAN	633	832	1152	459	609	914	910	660	730
MINNESOTA		784	1079	185	315	2664		492	707
MISSISSIPPI							1314	2260	952
MONTANA	32	24	34	48	42	28	48	40	34
NEVADA	5	18	23	54	8	8	45		
NEW HAMPSHIRE	135	157	208	186	170	181	205	236	206
NEW YORK	171	329	413	405	496	533	636	467	677
NORTH CAROLINA		1606	1407	968	893	878	1390	927	1357
OREGON	198	265	331	298	339	276	439	300	348
RHODE ISLAND	4	1					34	15	25
SOUTH CAROLINA				526	699	783	1351	560	476
TENNESSEE							2		
TEXAS					3	62	63		
VERMONT			11	27	28	27	27	42	76
VIRGINIA	890	648	642	602	612	594	1255	1141	813
WASHINGTON	359	597	557	635	691	661	1287	760	722
WISCONSIN	483	960	1199	1492	1269	853	1271	1053	962
TOTAL	10,809	15,010	18,869	16,070	16,279	16,836	32,846	27,031	29,665
AVG. PELT PRICE	$18	$25	$35	$32	$31	$50	$53		
TOTAL CANADA HARVEST	14,848	14,958	18,466	17,749	14,942	16,029	19,932		
AV. PELT PRICE	$28	$33.50	$47	$43	$43.50	$72	$69.04		

Source: 1970/71 - 1976/77 Trapping Season Data from North American Furbearers (Deems and Pursley, 1978); 1977/78 and 1978/79 data from ESSA Reports in Federal Registers.

TABLE 2

U.S. EXPORT OF RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS)
SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS

COUNTRY	1977 SKIN	1977 FINISHED PRODUCT	1978 SKIN	1978 FINISHED PRODUCT
ARGENTINA			42	
AUSTRIA	584		651	
* CANADA	452	1	3,908	
* DENMARK			283	
* ITALY	97		156	
* SWITZERLAND	279 (108)	1 (1)	2,187+ (195)	
* UNITED KINGDOM	49 (153)			
* WEST GERMANY	434 (3,506)		3,644 (3,904)	
UNSPECIFIED	1,119			
TOTAL	3,014	2	10,871	0

* CITES Party Country

\+ 195 of these originated in Canada

Source: 1977/1978 U.S. CITES Reports. The number in parenthesis is the import figure listed in the importing country's CITES Report.

TABLE 3

U.S. RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS) EXPORT BY STATE
(FISCAL YEAR: OCTOBER THROUGH SEPTEMBER)

STATE	FY 1978	FY 1979
ALABAMA	164	528
ALASKA	1225	315
ARKANSAS	-	50
* COLORADO	-	1
CONNECTICUT	13	42
DELAWARE	0	16
FLORIDA	325	904
GEORGIA	794	1538
* IDAHO	1	-
LOUISIANA	1776	1801
MAINE	622	549
MARYLAND	4	170
MASSACHUSETTS	58	98
MICHIGAN	4	121
MINNESOTA	137	296
MISSISSIPPI	76	115
* MISSOURI	-	1
MONTANA	22	10
NEW HAMPSHIRE	26	113
NEW YORK	27	259
NORTH CAROLINA	775	741
OREGON	222	283
RHODE ISLAND	7	21
SOUTH CAROLINA	357	178
* TENNESSEE	-	15
* UTAH	-	3
VERMONT	81	36
VIRGINIA	452	609
WASHINGTON	438	382
WISCONSIN	708	376
UNKNOWN	269	1092
TOTAL	8,583	10,663

* These states all have closed seasons. The figures presented may actually be errors made in identifying state abbreviations on tags or in tallying.

Source: Wildlife Permit Office, FWS, USDI

TABLE 4

CANADA EXPORT OF RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS)

SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS

COUNTRY	1977 SKIN	1977 FINISHED PRODUCT	1978 SKIN	1978 FINISHED PRODUCT
AUSTRIA			245	1
BELGIUM			12	1
* FINLAND	21			
* FRANCE	42			4
HONG KONG			8	
IRELAND				1
* ITALY	943	5	585	
JAPAN	37	3		21
NETHERLANDS				1
* NORWAY	1	2		
SAUDI ARABIA		1		
SPAIN		3		
* SWEDEN		2		4
* SWITZERLAND	1,540 (0)	79 (58)	1,024 (76)	45 (40)

TABLE 4

CANADA EXPORT OF RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS)
SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS
(cont.)

COUNTRY	1977 SKIN	1977 FINISHED PRODUCT	1978 SKIN	1978 FINISHED PRODUCT
* UNITED KINGDOM	49 (48)	6 (0)	24 (0)	6 (0)
* UNITED STATES	705 (2,256) 86 KG	43 (1)	910 (1,924) 18 KG	63 (14)
* WEST GERMANY	94 (94)	13 (0)	2,066 (2,163)	42 (0)
TOTAL	3,432 + 86 KG	157	4,874 + 18 KG	189

* CITES Party Country

Source: 1977/1978 Canada CITES Report. The number in parenthesis is the import figure listed in the importing country's CITES Report.

IMPORT OF RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS)

SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS

COUNTRY	1977 SKIN	1977 FINISHED PRODUCT	1978 SKIN	1978 FINISHED PRODUCT	EXPORTING COUNTRY	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
ARGENTINA			(42)		USA	USA
AUSTRIA	(584)		(651)		USA	USA
			(245)	(1)	CANADA	-
	(471)				UK	-
BELGIUM			(12)	(1)	CANADA	CANADA
* CANADA	(452)	(1)	(3,908)		USA	USA
	(13)				UK	-
* DENMARK			226	(283)	USA	USA
* FINLAND	(21)				CANADA	-
			(22)		USA	-
* FRANCE	(42)			(4)	CANADA	CANADA
HONG KONG			(8)		CANADA	CANADA
IRELAND				(1)	CANADA	CANADA
* ITALY			(10)		UK	USA
	(48)		(62)		UK	CANADA
	(97)		(156)		USA	USA
	(943)	(5)	(585)		CANADA	CANADA
			(278)		FRG	FRG
JAPAN	(37)	(3)		(21)	CANADA	CANADA
NETHERLANDS				(1)	CANADA	CANADA
* NORWAY	(1)	(2)			CANADA	CANADA

IMPORT OF RIVER OTTER (LUTRA CANADENSIS)

SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS
(cont.)

COUNTRY	1977 SKIN	1977 FINISHED PRODUCT	1978 SKIN	1978 FINISHED PRODUCT	EXPORTING COUNTRY	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
SAUDI ARABIA		(1)			CANADA	CANADA
SPAIN			(42)		UK	USA
		(3)			CANADA	CANADA
* SWEDEN		(2)		(4)	CANADA	CANADA
* SWITZERLAND			195		USA	CANADA
	108 (279)	1 (1)	(1,992)		USA	USA
			12 (13)	4	FRG	USA
			(2)	(1)	FRG	CANADA
	(1,540)	58 (79)	76 (1,024)	38 (45)	CANADA	-
			82		ITALY	
			8		UK	
* UNITED KINGDOM#	153 (49)				USA	-
	48 (49)	(6)	(24)	(6)	CANADA	-
			1		NORWAY	CANADA
* UNITED STATES		4 (4)	1	(1)	DENMARK	-
	2,256 (705)	1 (43)	1,924 (910)	14 (63)	CANADA	CANADA
	86 KG		18 KG		CANADA	CANADA
			177 (177)		FRG	CANADA
* WEST GERMANY	42 (128)			(40)	UK	-
	94 (94)		2,163 (2,066)	(42)	CANADA	-
	3,056 (434)		3,094 (3,644)		USA	-
				(1)	SWITZERLAND	-
			(168)		DENMARK	USA
TOTALS:	10,006 + 86 KG	87	16,976 + 18 KG	180		

* CITES Party Country
\# UK Import Figures for 1978 are partial.
( ) The number in parenthesis is the export figure listed in the exporting country's CITES Report.
Source: 1977 and 1978 CITES Reports by Canada, Denmark, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany.

TABLE 6

IMPORT OF RIVER OTTER (*LUTRA* SPECIES)
SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS

Importing Country	Species	Quantity 1977	Quantity 1978	Country of Origin or Re-export
FINLAND	*Lutra lutra*		9	USSR
SWITZERLAND	*Lutra* spp. (unspecified)		40	West Germany
		4		Turkey
		1		United Kingdom
	Lutra lutra	116		West Germany*
	L. perspicillata	3 products		West Germany
UNITED KINGDOM	*Lutra lutra*	20 (re-import)		Belgium
UNITED STATES	*Lutra* spp. (unspecified)	12		Argentina
WEST GERMANY	*Lutra* spp. (unspecified)	2,337		United Kingdom
		4,411	4,006	Peru
		39	54	Belize
		101	389	Panama
		8,349	17,273	Paraguay
		73	1	Argentina
		268		India
		681		Austria
			1,374	Bolivia
			162	Mexico
			272	Italy
			690	Iraq
			10 products	Argentina
			467 products	Greenland

* These skins reportedly originated in Paraguay, a country where *L. lutra* does not exist.

Source: 1977 and 1978 CITES Reports from Finland, the United Kingdom, the United States, West Germany and Switzerland.

TABLE 7

RE-EXPORT OF RIVER OTTER (*LUTRA* SPECIES)
SKINS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS

Re-Export Country	Species	Quantity 1977	Quantity 1978	Destination Country	Country of Origin or Export
NITED KINGDOM*	*Lutra lutra*	544		Italy	-
		960	20	West Germany	-
			2	Switzerland	-
			6	Belgium	-
	Lutra longicaudis	40		Austria	-
		30		Belgium	-
		1,637		West Germany	-
	L. perspicillata		1,744	West Germany	-
EST GERMANY	*Lutra* spp. (unspecified)	116	28	Switzerland	Paraguay
		30	250	Austria	Paraguay
		730		Belgium	Paraguay
		38		Greenland	Paraguay
		20		United States	Belgium
		12		Austria	Bolivia
		12		United States	West Germany
		211		United States	Italy
		31		Switzerland	Peru

All re-exported skins were imported into the U.K. prior to 3 February, 1977.

urce: 1977/78 CITES Report for the United Kingdom and West Germany.